

They probably did more to ripen Scotland for revolution than all the preachers and martyrs put together.

His span of life was co-extensive with the reform movement to which he contributed so powerful an impulse. He was born in 1490; he died in 1555. His birthplace was either the Mount, near Cupar-Fife, or Garmylton, near Haddington, the ancestral estates to which he fell heir. The predilection of the historians has fixed on the former, and, in that case, he would receive his education at Cupar Grammar School. It was completed at St Andrews University. The treasurer's accounts tell us that he took part in plays at the court of James IV., and up to 1524 he acted as master usher or tutor to James V., who four years later appointed him Lyon King-of-Arms. In this capacity he was more than once sent on embassies abroad—to the court of Charles V. at Brussels in 1531 to negotiate the renewal of the commercial treaty with the Netherlands, to Paris in 1536 to negotiate a matrimonial alliance between his master and a French princess. He wrote the greater number of his pieces, notably the "Satire of the Three Estates" (1540), during the active reign of James V., though the most elaborate of them all, "The Monarchic, or Dialogue betwix Experience and ane Courteour" (1553), belongs to the period of the regency of Arran.

He was undoubtedly one of the most forcible of Scottish men in this age. He does not confine his satire to the Church. He lashes the abuses rampant in the State and in society as well, though his sharpest hits are reserved for the kirkmen. The lightning flash of his satire ripened the country for revolution, both ecclesiastical and political. Kings, nobles, lairds, merchants, even the people itself, as well as bishops, abbots, priests, and monks, came in for their share of castigation. His shafts pierce political and social as well as ecclesiastical abuses, and he may, without exaggeration, be described as the genius of universal, aggressive reform in his age. What is singular in a man who was a court official as well as a knight and a landed proprietor, he was quick to note the grievances of the poor man, to place the interests of the people at large above that of any class or individual. There is in him a strong strain of Burns. Like Burns, his moral versatility was extraordinary. In almost one and the same breath he can speak the language